What is a fish consumption advisory?

A fish consumption advisory recommends limited consumption of fish or shellfish from a particular area. It is not illegal to eat fish or shellfish from an area with a consumption advisory, but people should not eat more than the amount recommended in the advisory.

What is a fish possession ban?

A fish possession ban prohibits the taking of fish and shellfish from an area where a serious or imminent threat to public health has been identified. It is illegal to keep fish or shellfish from that particular body of water.

General Fish Consumption Guidance

* Eat smaller, younger fish..
* Remove skin, dark muscle tissue, and fat from fish. Do not eat the fish's internal organs. Contaminants tend to build up in all of these areas.
* Eating contaminated fish frequently and regularly over a long period of time poses potential human health risks. Follow current DSHS advisories and bans to reduce your exposure to contaminants.

How much fish is in a "meal"?

	Uncooked (ounces)	Cooked (ounces)	Approximate size
Adult	8	6	Palm of adult hand
Child	4	3	Palm of child hand

For more information contact the:

Texas Department of State Health Services
Health Assessment & Toxicology Program
Austin, TX 78756
1-800-588-1248
www.dshs.state.tx.us/epitox/hat.shtm

For more information about fish advisories or bans in Texas, contact the:

Environmental and Consumer Safety Section
Seafood and Aquatic Life Group MC 1987
Texas Department of State Health Services
Austin, TX 78714-9347
(512) 834-6757
www.dshs.state.tx.us/seafood/survey.shtm

Fish Consumption in Texas

Guide on Fish Consumption and the Effects on Human Health

TEXAS Department of State Health Services

7/2015

Publication No. 09-14639

9769649

Texas is second only to Alaska for its miles of rivers, streams, lakes, and over 400 miles of coastal shoreline and bays. Fishing is a great tradition for many Texas families. So is eating what you catch. Fish are a lean, low-calorie source of protein.

However, some fish may contain contaminants taken in from the water they live in and the food they eat. Some of these contaminants can build up in the fish, and in humans, to levels that may pose a health risk.

The Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) tests fish and shellfish from Texas public waters for contamination. When DSHS determines that fish or shellfish in a Texas water body contain unsafe contaminant levels, a consumption advisory or possession ban may be issued. These advisories and/or bans are issued to limit the consumption of contaminated species of fish or shellfish and to protect the health of you and your family.

How can eating contaminated fish or shellfish affect human health?

Eating contaminated fish or shellfish does not necessarily mean adverse health effects will occur. The potential for exposed persons to experience adverse health effects depends on the:

* **specific chemicals** in the fish or shellfish,
* **amount of chemicals** in the fish or shellfish,
* **amount of contaminated** fish or shellfish consumed, and
* **health condition of the person** eating the contaminated fish or shellfish.

Long-term exposure to some contaminants may cause adverse health effects, including:

* cancer,
* organ and reproductive damage, and
* developmental damage to unborn children of women who eat highly-contaminated fish or shellfish for many years before becoming pregnant or during pregnancy.

People that may be more susceptible to health problems related to eating contaminated fish include:

* those who eat a lot of fish or shellfish caught in areas known to have contamination,
* pregnant women or women of childbearing age,
* children under the age of 12, and
* people with heart, thyroid, or immune system issues.

Should people stop eating fish?

No! Fish are not only rich in protein, vitamins, and minerals, they are also low in saturated fat. Fish plays an important role in maintaining a healthy, well-balanced diet. Many doctors suggest that eating a half pound of fish each week will help prevent heart disease.

Steps can be taken to reduce risks from eating contaminated fish. The fat of the fish is where most of the contaminants are stored. As fish grow older, they tend to develop a higher overall body fat content. By choosing to eat younger, smaller fish, exposure to contaminants is reduced. Smaller fish have less fat and have retained fewer contaminants.

Unfortunately, chemical contaminants are in most foods we eat and cannot be completely avoided. Understanding the benefits of eating fish along with concerns regarding contamination can be confusing, but the important thing is to make smart choices. Knowing where the fish or shellfish you eat come from will enable you to choose fish that are low in contaminants, and therefore safer for you and your family to eat.